

Patient information

CFS - Sleep

Sleeping problems are common in young people with CFS. Issues include:

- You are sleeping too much.
- You are struggling to get to sleep.
- You are sleeping more during the day and less at night.

Things you can do to help:

Your Bedroom

If possible, the only thing you should do in your bedroom is sleep. This may mean doing your schoolwork in another room or separating your room into a sleeping and working area. Ideally you should not watch devices or rest in your room. The idea being that when you enter your bedroom your brain gets lots of signals to say, 'it is sleep time now.'

Sleep Routine

It helps your brain if you can have a routine before going to bed that is the same every evening. This will give your brain lots of signals to go to sleep. For example, you might find that a warm bath relaxes you and a warm drink might help you get off to sleep.

Avoid activities that stimulate your brain, such as watching television, going on your phone, tablet or playing computer games. Switch off all electronic devices an hour before you go to bed. These items all give off blue light, this is the same as the light produced at dawn and so gives your brain the message it is time to wake up rather than go to sleep. Also avoid consuming anything that contains caffeine in the afternoon. Caffeine is in energy drinks, coffee, tea and colas.

Some people find it helpful to do quiet activities such as word searches, reading, or reflection diaries. Relaxing music can also be helpful. It is a good idea to dim the lights and use a warm colour bedside lamp rather than the main light for the last hour.

Whichever method works best for you, try to do the same routine every evening so that your brain recognises this pattern and associates it with going to sleep.

What if I can't get to sleep?

If you can't get to sleep after 20 minutes – get up, go out of your bedroom and try your sleep routine again, or go and make yourself a warm drink. You may need to do this a few times, but it will get easier. Avoid tossing and turning in bed.

If this is still not helpful you could try relaxation exercises, reading or visualisation techniques.

How much should I sleep?

The live-well guide to sleep suggests 9-12 hours for 6–12-year-olds and 8-10 hours for 13–18-year-olds. One hour more than suggested can reduce the quality of sleep you are having and leave you feeling more tired. Try and stick to the recommended amount of sleep where possible.

When should I sleep?

It is important that your brain gets the correct stimulation it needs to know when it is day or night. Make sure you are awake during the day with curtains open so that you see daylight.

Day/Night reversal is common in young people with CFS. If you do suffer from day/night reversal, treat it like jet lag. Wake up 30-60 minutes earlier each day until you are waking up between 7 and 8 am. Initially you will feel much worse because you will be having less sleep, but after a couple of weeks you should be sleeping better at night.

Can I rest during the day?

There are different types of rest which people find helpful. Most rest doesn't involve sleeping but does include sitting quietly, relaxing and listening to music. This should not be in your bedroom if possible. If you really need a sleep, make sure that it is for less than 40 minutes by setting an alarm, you are awake by 3pm and keep as much daylight in the room as you can, otherwise your night-time sleep could be disrupted.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities, please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk>

